(b) if so, whether the provisions that were framed to give representation to the best and proven talents of all Indian languages are being distorted and vested interests are alleged to be making changes with ulterior motives; and

(c) if so, whether Government would institute an enquiry in their administrative, financial and professional working?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (c) Concerns had been expressed by some eminent writers and General Council members largely in the context of amendments made by the General Council of the Sahitya Akademi, in its meeting held on 7.10.2007, to certain provisions of the Akademi's Constitution.

Objections regarding these amendments have been addressed by the General Council in its subsequent meeting held on 26.12.2007. The reconstitution of General Council of Sahitya Akademi has since been completed according to the provisions contained in the Constitution of the Sahitya Akademi. A new President of the Akademi has also been elected by the newly-constituted General Council in its meeting held on 20.02.2008.

Increase in airfare in gulf sector

*8. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received complaints alleging that Air India is hiking the airfare in the Gulf route during the peak seasons;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government proposes to stop this unjustified exploitation;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Suggestions have been received from some Hon'ble MPs for reducing the fares to/from Gulf region to stations in Kerala/Karnataka.

(c) to (e) Airlines generally maintain very competitive fares on gulf sector. While the fares are maintained at normal level during vacation/festival time, the fares the reduced during the non-peak periods when the demand is low. Air India has also launched a low cost subsidiary called Air India Express which operates on the Gulf route and offers 20-25% lower airfares than those charged by the legacy carriers with the discount in fare going up to even 50% during lean season.

Decline in irrigation by canals

†*9. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been continuous decline in irrigation by canals during the last ten years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of efforts being made to enhance irrigation sector?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi